

7th INTERNATIONAL ORCHESTRA CONDUCTING ACADEMY

ESTORIL '26 – PORTUGAL

The **Cascais and Oeiras Chamber Orchestra** is pleased to present the 7th International Conducting Academy – Estoril '26, an elite training program for rising conductors who seek to refine their technique and interpretation under the guidance of world-class mentors while working with a professional orchestra.

From the 19th to the 25th of July, at the **Cascais Conservatory of Music**, participants will engage in an intensive week of masterclasses, rehearsals, and hands-on experience with a professional orchestra. The program culminates in the **International Conducting Competition**, where finalists will showcase their skills in a public concert. The winner will be invited to return as a guest conductor in the following season.

Rhythmic Innovation and Formal Modernism: Stravinsky, Respighi and Villa Lobos:

In a year marking the 110th anniversary of the first performance of Igor Stravinsky's *The Firebird* Suite in the Iberian Peninsula, presented in Madrid by the Ballets Russes in 1916 and followed by its arrival in Portugal the following year, the program of the **International Academy of Orchestra Conducting – Estoril 2026** places this landmark work at the center of its artistic and pedagogical focus. The program also honors another master of original and virtuosic orchestral color, the Italian composer Ottorino Respighi, through his suite *Gli Uccelli*, 90 years after the death of the composer.

Both Stravinsky and Respighi were students of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, a pivotal figure in the development of orchestral timbre in Russian music, whose groundbreaking approach to orchestration profoundly influenced the evolution of orchestral language among subsequent generations of composers throughout Europe.


The Academy's program further includes another essential voice of musical modernism: the Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos, whose work represents a unique synthesis of European modernist techniques with Brazilian rhythmic, melodic, and formal traditions.


Taken together, this repertoire explores multiple dimensions of the orchestral fabric — from folkloric origins to rhythmic innovation and revolutionary harmonic language — combined with formal clarity and structural coherence. It demands a refined, stylistically informed approach to orchestral conducting, as well as a deep understanding of musical architecture, offering participants an exceptional framework for advanced artistic and technical development.


An Unparalleled Conducting Experience


The **International Conducting Academy – Estoril ‘26** is an intensive and transformative program designed for conductors seeking to **elevate their technique** and deepen their understanding of music. Over the course of a week, participants will work hands-on with a **professional orchestra**, refine their **gestural clarity**, and explore the subtleties of orchestral color and texture.


 **Direct collaboration with a professional orchestra** – All active participants will conduct the **Cascais and Oeiras Chamber Orchestra** in high-level rehearsal sessions.


 **Mastery of technique and expression** – The program will focus on **essential conducting fundamentals**, including gesture, sound control, rehearsal planning, and stylistic interpretation.


 **Over 30 hours of instruction** – This includes **full orchestra rehearsals** and specialized training with a string ensemble to refine technical and stylistic conducting skills.

 **Extensive podium time** – Each participant will receive between **2 and 3 hours of podium time** with the orchestra, depending on their progress during the Academy.

 **The art of accompaniment** – Working with **Heitor Villa Lobos’ *Concert for Guitar***, conductors will gain **valuable experience in accompanying soloists**, honing their listening skills and adaptability.

 **Orchestration as a palette of colors** – Through the timbral nuances of “*Gli Uccelli*” (Ottorino Respighi) and *Suite de O Pássaro de Fogo* (Igor Stravinsky), participants will explore **orchestral transparency, texture, and fluidity**, refining their interpretative approach to neo-classical music.

 **International Conducting Competition** – The three finalists will conduct the **Cascais and Oeiras Chamber Orchestra** in a **public concert**, competing for the grand prize. The winner will be invited back as a guest conductor in the following season.

 **Certification and Professional Video Recording** – All participants will receive an **official certificate**, and finalists will receive a **professionally recorded audio and video** of their performance in the final concert.

 **Estoril, Portugal – A Perfect Setting for Artistic Growth**

Nestled along the Atlantic coast, **Estoril** combines the charm of European tradition with an inspiring atmosphere for musical study. The **Cascais Conservatory of Music** offers **state-of-the-art facilities** for this prestigious international gathering of conductors.

Apply Now and Take Your Conducting to the Next Level!

The **7th International Conducting Academy – Estoril ‘26** is more than a course—it is a gateway to international recognition for talented conductors.

🔗 **More information & applications:** www.occo.pt

✉️ **Contact:** orquestra@occo.pt

🏠 **Faculty:**

🎵 **Nikolay Lalov** – www.nikolaylalov.com

🎵 **Ricardo Averbach** – <https://miamioh.edu/profiles/cca/ricardo-averbach.html>

☀️ **Join us in Portugal and immerse yourself in the elegance and artistry of orchestral music!**

Repertoire

- **Ottorino Respighi:** *Suite “Gli Uccelli”*
 - **Heitor Villa-Lobos:** *Concerto for Guitar and Small Orchestra*
 - **Igor Stravinsky:** *The Firebird Suite* (1919 version)
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Competition Prizes

🥇 **First Prize** – €1,000 + invitation to conduct a concert as a guest conductor with the **Cascais and Oeiras Chamber Orchestra** in the following season.

🥈 **Second Prize** – €900.

🥉 **Third Prize** – €500

🏆 **Special Award** – The jury may grant an additional **scholarship covering 50% of tuition fees**.

📹 **Professional Video Recording** – Finalists will receive a **high-quality recording** of their performance. Finalists may purchase recordings for **€80**.

Application Process & Fees



Limited Spots Available – Only **10 active participants** will be accepted.

Applications will be reviewed in the order they are received, based on **CV and/or video submission**.



Application Deadline: March 30, 2026



Fees:



Passive Participant – €40



Active Participant – €800



Special Discount – Applicants who pay the full amount upon registration receive a **5% discount**. For others, a **50% non-refundable deposit** is required upon acceptance, with the remaining balance due at the start of the course.

Schedule (July 19–25, 2026) Advanced Level

July 19 (Sunday)

- **14:00** – Registration and welcome of participants
 - **14:30–16:30** – Lecture: *Common Mistakes and Challenges in Conducting Practice*
 - **17:00–19:30** – Session on *Score Study and Rehearsal Strategy*
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July 20–21 (Monday–Tuesday)

Preparatory & Introductory Orchestra Sessions

- **09:30–12:50** – Orchestra rehearsals (preparatory sessions)
 - String orchestra
 - 5 participants per session
 - **14:00–17:20** – Orchestra rehearsals (introductory sessions)
 - Wind/Brass/Percussion orchestra
 - 5 participants per session
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July 22–23 (Wednesday–Thursday)

Full Orchestra Sessions

- **09:30–12:30** – Rehearsals with the full orchestra (5 participants)
 - **14:00–17:00** – Rehearsals with the full orchestra (5 participants)
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July 24 (Friday)

- **09:30–12:50** – Rehearsals with the full orchestra (8 participants)
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July 25 (Saturday)

- **19:30–20:30** – Dress rehearsal (3 finalists)
 - **21:00** – Final Concert conducted by the three finalists
 - Winner Announcement & Prize Ceremony
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